APPENDIX

Vol. 34, No. 48 November 28, 1975

10TH NATIONAL WORKSHOP AND COLLOQUIUM OF THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
Asheville, N.C., October 23-26, 1975

The 10th National Workshop and Colloquium of the Oral History Association was held in Asheville, N.C., October 23-26. More than 200 persons representing over 40 states and several foreign countries attended.

During the four-day conference, how-to-do-it workshops were interspersed with reports from persons involved with oral history projects in this country and abroad. Highlights of the conference were addresses by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk and author Merle Miller and a Southern Appalachian Musical Night arranged by the Appalachian Consortium. The Consortium also sponsored a bus tour of Skyline Drive and a visit to the Cradle of Forestry and other scenic places in the Asheville area.

That oral history has secured a place of its own among the various disciplines now goes undisputed, but the persistent dilemma of edited versus unedited transcripts and retained versus erased tapes was discussed at length and came up in nearly every session with no specific criteria ever established as to what the best practice should be.

On Thursday, the conference was devoted to a definition of oral history, discussions on the literature and uses of oral history, and an evening session on interviewing techniques.

In the opening presentation, "What is Oral History? A Working Definition," Waddy Moore, University of Central Arkansas, stated that oral history is not just turning on a tape recorder, but is an attempt to create new source material. It is a way of retelling the story of the past and filling in gaps where information is not available. It can put flesh on a subject, provide color and atmosphere, and guarantee a way to be remembered correctly. As a teaching device, it can help students find out about the community where they live and give a sense of belonging, as well as introduce them to an historical method. Oral history is a way of creating "people history," and is particularly applicable in the study of ethnic and minority groups.

The problem of defining oral history is compounded by the problem of defining the literature of oral history. William Moss, John F. Kennedy Library, in a discussion of the literature of oral history, posed the question of whether the books, edited transcripts, compilations, catalogs, bibliographies, writings in related areas on interviewing and survey techniques, along with newsletters and meeting proceedings, are the product or the literature of oral history. Oral history and literature, he suggested, are mutually exclusive terms. Interview transcripts are not literature in the traditional sense because transcripts not only have a different set of presumptions, but are different in style and content. The casting about for spoken thoughts and the pauses and body language in oral history take on an entirely different character than the carefully written text. Probably less concern should be devoted to a definition of the literature of oral history and more attention to doing it. A number of questions then arise: How good a source is memory? What about the bias of the interviewer as well as the interviewee? How can trivia be reduced? What is the record—the tape or the transcript? There are other important questions about what to do with the tapes, how to organize them for library research use, how they should be indexed and cataloged, and how to apply research service to the taped interview. The legal status of the recording must also be considered—to whom does it belong, and why, and who should control its use?

Three brief presentations followed in which Dick Laird, Lubbock Christian College, demonstrated the use of the sound on slide process; Joan Warnow, American Institute of Physics, explained how she had assembled a mixed media program utilizing oral history for teaching science courses; and Martha Ross, University of Maryland, emphasized the need for integrity and flexibility in utilizing oral history in continuing education programs. These two words—"integrity" and "flexibility"—were to be heard over and over during the conference.

That evening the conference was divided into five groups for demonstrations by experienced interviewers in interviewing techniques and practice sessions for participants. Evaluations and criticism of the demonstrated techniques were taken from the audiences and lively question-and-answer periods followed.

Friday morning was filled with workshop sessions

on the implications of oral history for archivists and librarians, editing transcripts, and office management and finance, followed by an all-afternoon session on research prospects in oral history.

Charles Schultz, Texas A & M University, spoke briefly to the problem of edited versus actual transcripts and concluded that from the archivist's standpoint edited transcripts were more useful.

Joseph Boykin, Jr., University of North Carolina, addressed the same problem from the librarian's view. In his opinion, the best chance of taped materials being used is if they are housed in a library because the library is structured to provide service. Librarians, however, must learn how to handle the materials as well as to conduct interviews. Standards should be set for cataloging just as they have been set for books. Original tapes and transcripts should be placed in archives and treated as archival materials, but copies of tapes and transcripts should be in a library where the transcripts can be bound, cataloged, classified, and intershelved into library collections; the tapes should go into the audiovisual collection. Undergraduate students' needs can generally be met by an edited transcript, but historians will want to use the original which provides more information than the edited version. Closed interviews should be retained in an archival state until released for use.

Arthur Hansen, California State University, Fullerton, again stressed integrity in discussing editing of transcripts. The primary function of editing the transcript is to convert sounds into meaning and the editor should have the freedom to enhance the meaning without damaging the integrity. He illustrated the importance of having the interviewee read the transcript in order to prevent contextual errors by relating some humorous, but very misleading transcriptions in which T.B. (for tuberculosis) had been transcribed as teepee, and youth in Asia had been heard as euthanasia! Vigorous discussion followed from the audience about the use of footnoting and whether or not integrity was destroyed by editing transcripts.

The subject turned to office management in talks by James Hammock, Jr., Murray State University, MacLyn Burg, Eisenhower Library, and John Bluth, Brigham Young University, each telling how he had set up his particular program, the problems encountered, and the solutions applied. Each stressed that it was important to design procedures and programs which satisfy one's own specific needs. Betty McKeever Key, Maryland Historical Society, ended the morning session with a rundown of the time and money necessary for an interviewing program. The entire process from the research through the final editing for publication will cost an average $200-500/hour and will consume many hours of work—the most in research for the interview and the typing and re-typing of the manuscript. It is important to know one's own goals and set priorities before starting, and to utilize as many existing institutional facilties as possible.

Eleven sub-sessions on research prospects in oral history ran concurrently that afternoon. They were Music History, Institutional History, Labor History, Fund Raising, Political History, Literature, Church History, Urban History, and Black History; each was led by a person experienced in that particular field.

Former Secretary of State Dean Rusk addressed the conference that evening. He expressed the view that much could be gained by interviewing groups and that probing questions were a must. Oral history, he said, sets the basis for further research and summaries of interviews would be very valuable. He does not intend to write his memoirs because he does not want to reminisce about the past but to look forward to the future. He has participated, however, in the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson oral history programs. His official papers were left at the State Department when he left that office and will be available to scholars as national security permits.

Six concurrent sessions, three at a time, were held Saturday morning. They were Chicano Oral History in the United States, Agricultural Oral History, Oral Sources and Women's History, Interviewing Liberal Intellectuals, Civil Rights Movement: The Perspective Produced by Oral History, and Oral History and American Culture. Two or three presentations followed by commentary, and a question-and-answer period were incorporated into each session.

At the luncheon meeting, reports were made of oral history projects in Canada, Mexico and Latin America, and Brazil by Leo LaClare, Eugenia Meyer, and George Brown, respectively.

Conference participants were invited to take a bus tour that afternoon to Skyline Drive, to the Cradle of Forestry where fresh apple pie and cider were served, and other scenic places in the Asheville area. The trip was sponsored by the Appalachian Consortium which also arranged an entertainment of Southern Appalachian music after the address that evening by Merle Miller, author of *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman.*

The annual business meeting was held Sunday morning under the chairmanship of association Presi-

dent Samuel Proctor, University of Florida, who made opening remarks and called for committee reports.

Gary Shumway, California State University, Fullerton, reporting for the Regional Workshops Committee, stated that regional workshops had been held at Fullerton and Murray State University with another in the planning stage for the Middle West. Ronald Marcello, North Texas State University, reporting for Chairman Johnye Mathews, University of Arkansas, distributed preliminary copy of a questionnaire prepared by the committee on the Interpretive Use of Oral History to be completed by users of oral history. He invited comments and criticism of the questionnaire and asked that these be sent to Miss Mathews at Little Rock. Amelia Fry, University of California, Berkeley, reporting for the Goals and Guidelines Committee, and Charles Morrissey, Vermont Historical Society, reporting for the Constitutional Review Committee, both stated that their committees had presented their findings to the Council which, in turn, will submit the recommendations to the membership through the newsletter. Recommendations will be voted upon at next year's meeting.

Among the eight recommended constitutional changes are the combination of the secretary and treasurer positions into an executive secretary; the composition of the Council changed to seven voting and three ex-officio members with the executive secretary sitting in but not voting; continuing the one-year length of term of office for officers; the Nominating Committee to consist of five members elected from a slate of eight to ten persons nominated from the floor with the top five as winners; and that the dues structure be decided by the Council in concurrence with the membership at the annual meeting. Because the committee had voted three to two against recommending a mail ballot, it was recommended that the incoming president appoint a committee to report back further recommendations at the next annual meeting.

Resolutions were read and approved in appreciation of the contributions to the Association from the late Arline Custer, Library of Congress; Manfred Waserman, compiler, *Bibliography on Oral History;* Bernard Galm, editor of the *Oral History Newsletter;* and Knox Mellon, immediate past treasurer of the Association.

A resolution from the floor calling for a mail ballot for voting on next year's elections and other business matters was referred to the Council.

Elected to office for the next year were Alice Hoffman, Pennsylvania State University, President; William Wyatt, Western Health Systems, Inc., Rapid City, S.D., President-elect; Ronald Marcello, Secretary-treasurer; and William Moss, Council member to replace Gary Shumway.

In assuming her office, President Hoffman announced that she would retain the standing committees, but would enlarge the Nominating Committee. She also announced that she would appoint a committee to review the ballot mailing situation. She stated that she plans to create new committees to study the feasibility of an oral history project of the Oral History Association; to evaluate oral history projects; and to evaluate past colloquia and make recommendations to the Council for future meetings. She appointed James Mink, University of California, Los Angeles, as liaison between the OHA and the Society of American Archivists. She then introduced the planning and programing committees for next year's workshop and colloquium which will be held September 9-12 in Ottawa and Quebec. The 1977 conference will be held October 20-23 in San Diego.

At the conclusion of the business meeting, Truman Eustis III, New York Times Legal Department, spoke on "Oral History: Court Decisions and Current Legislation." He described how the proposed Copyright Law revision will affect oral history and touched on the questions of privacy and libel citing legal cases which have pertained to oral history.

Theodore Rosengarten, author of *All God's Dangers* and winner of a National Book Award, closed the conference with his luncheon talk, "Nate Shaw and Oral History." [*Jean E. Tucker*]